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# PAWNS

## FOUR POETIC PLAYS

BY  
JOHN DRINKWATER

*Author of "Abraham Lincoln: A Play"  
"Poems: 1908-1919," etc.*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
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## INTRODUCTION

THESE four plays are characteristic of John Drinkwater's point of view. The sum of the world's beauty is a great majority of the total. If we choose deliberately to live with the minority of ugliness, we alone are to blame. Beauty, peace, and quiet may belong to our lives if we desire them as much as we seem to desire more ugly things. The so-called practical man may object that Drinkwater's vision is a poet's vision. Life leaves us little time for beauty. We need poets to puncture the fallacy of so absurd an argument. All beauty asks of any one, poet or business man alike, is that it be not ignored. You will not see it if you turn your back; it is, however, always there to see whenever you desire to make the effort. Nothing can hide it from our eyes but our own neglect.

As for peace and quiet, they are the natural concomitants of a mind loving beauty. If you carry the true vision about with you there is little danger that you will mar it with strife or unrest. Thus it follows that Drinkwater's

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point of view, like that of all real poets, is both sane and practical. It is sane because he is of those who urge us to live on decent, friendly terms with our neighbors; it is practical because only by so living may we have any hope of happiness. The upholders of the theory that life is a competitive struggle are the unpractical men. It is they who are the bringers of war to the nations and the occasions of strife at home. They have turned their backs upon beauty and set up altars to the false gods of practical affairs.

*X = 0* is the most deeply moving of these four plays, for it deals dramatically with the greatest of all evils — war. We need only to remember war as death stealing out of the darkness to strike down youth, to whom the vision of beauty is a natural dream, to realize war's horror. We then know war as the negation of truth. This play, furthermore, touches our emotions deeply because it is itself wrought out of deep emotion. Through the drama we see the ugly fact as it is and we come to hate it for its ugliness.

In like manner *The God of Quiet* reminds us that we often forego one essential of living. If men are to think and to do things — and they can do things only if they think — they must have the leisure that quiet brings. And,

## INTRODUCTION

like beauty, quiet may be found within. The world's uproar need not disturb the contemplative mind.

It is straining too far, perhaps, to interpret *King Cophetua* as a treatise upon democracy. John Drinkwater is, after all, a poet showing us his image of life in terms of beauty. We must beware of criticism which seeks to turn poetry into propaganda. It is a typical Anglo-Saxon failing to look upon our artists as preachers in disguise. But like all writers who are sincere, Drinkwater's attitude toward life shows through his work. We are therefore justified in making note of King Cophetua's dislike of advice which has expediency for its motive. It is enough to observe that the king chooses the beggar maid because she embodies an ideal with which her position in the world's opinion has nothing to do.

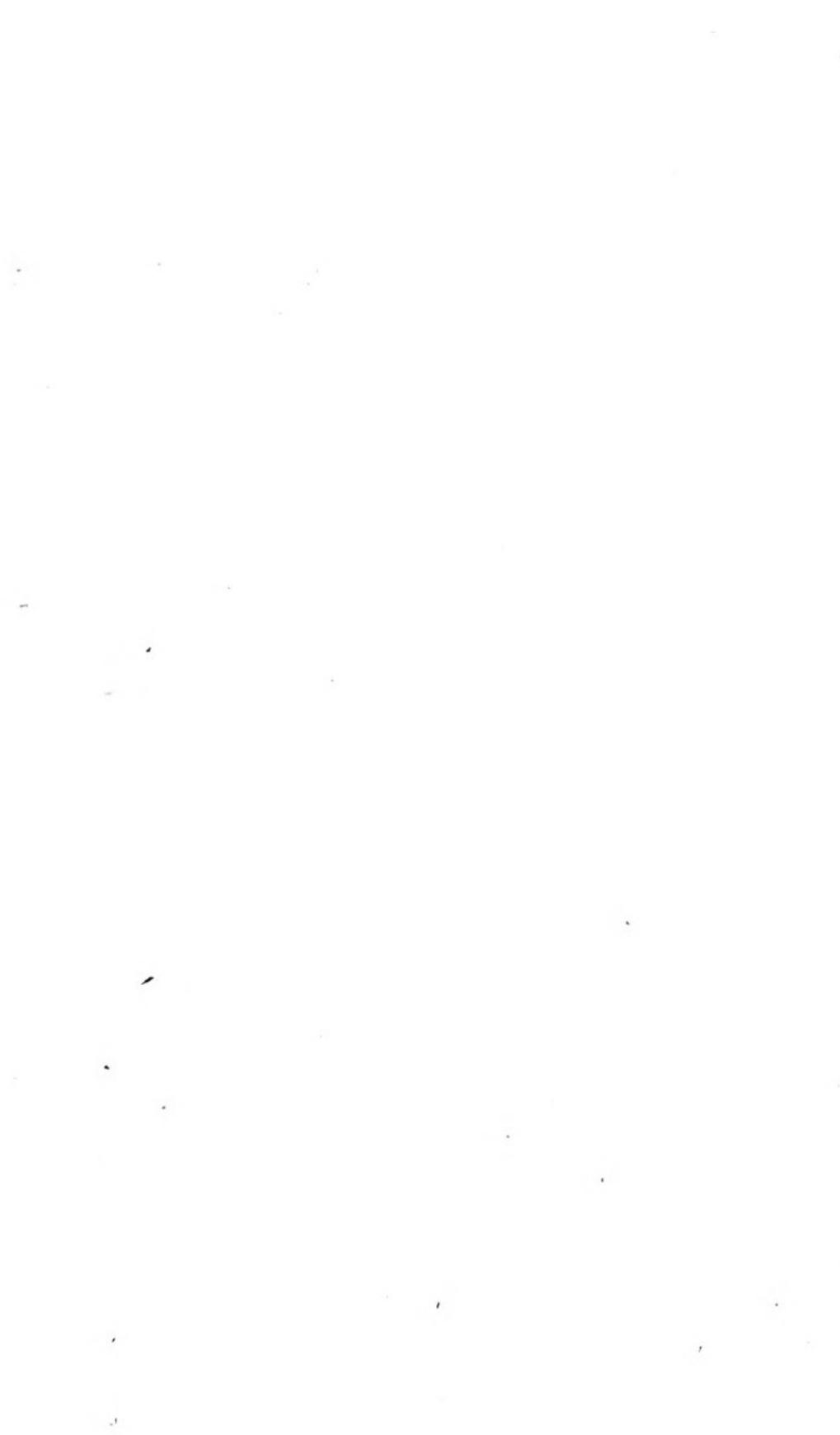
Neither readers nor audience need, however, to go searching beneath the surface of these plays. They are dramas expressed in poetry — the utterance of simple truths which we know beforehand, for of such are the materials of poetry and drama. We may read or see — and take pleasure thereby. That is what the author would wish to have us do.

JACK R. CRAWFORD



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THE STORM  
(1915)



**TO**  
**BARRY V. JACKSON**

THE CHARACTERS ARE  
ALICE  
JOAN, *her young Sister*  
SARAH  
AN OLD MAN  
A YOUNG STRANGER

## THE STORM

1948

*A mountain cottage. It is a midwinter night. Outside a snowstorm rages.*

*ALICE is looking out through the window. JOAN, her young sister, and SARAH, an old neighbour woman, are sitting over the fire.*

*Alice:* It is n't fair of God. Eyes are no good, Nor lanterns, in a blackness like to that. How can they find him out? It is n't fair.

*Sarah:* God is for prayers. You 'll anger Him speaking so.

*Alice:* I have prayed these hours, and now I 'm tired of it.

He is caught in some grip of the rocks, and crying out,

And crying and crying, and none can hear him cry,

Because of this great beastliness of noise.

*Sarah:* Past crying now, I think.

*Joan:* There, take no heed Of what she says — it 's a rusty mind she has, Being old, and wizened with bad luck on the hills.

*Sarah:* Rusty or no, I 've a thought the man is dead.

## PAWNS

No news has been growing apace from nightfall  
on

Into bad news, and now it's as though one  
stood

At the door and said, "We found him lying  
cold."

*Alice:* Whist! you old bitter woman. Will it  
never stay

In its wicked fury? . . . and the snow's like a  
black rain

Whipping the crying wind. If it would rest  
awhile

I could think and mind me what were best to do  
To help my man. But a savagery like this  
Beats at the wits till they have no tidiness.

*Sarah:* We'll sit and wait till they come.

*Alice:* And I a woman  
Would never let him ask for anything,  
Because of the daily thought I took for him, —  
And against this spite now I've no strength at  
all.

*Sarah:* For all you would bake his bread to a  
proper turn

And remember always the day for his clean  
shift,

There was many a scolding word for him to bear.

*Joan:* Hush —

*Alice:* Let her talk. What does she know at  
all, —

## THE STORM

Thinking crossed words between a man and  
a woman

Have anything to do with the heart? We have,  
My man and I, more than a fretful mood  
Can thieve or touch. My man — I must go my-  
self.

*Joan:* There is nothing you could do.

*Sarah:*                                    'T is men

Should carry the dead man in.

*Alice:*                                    My man  
Is alive, I say — surely my man's not dead —  
Surely, I say — old woman, your croaking talk  
Teases my brain like the pestilence out there  
Till I doubt the thing I know. There's not a  
crag

Or cleft in the hills but is natural to him  
As the stairs beyond the door there — surely,  
surely —

Yet nothing is sure.

*Sarah:*                                    Death has a way with him,  
A confident way.

*Alice:*                                    You know that he's not dead —  
I know that too — if only that dark rage  
Howling out there would leave tormenting me,  
And let me reason it out in peace a little,  
I could be quite, quite sure that he's not dead.

*Sarah:* Age is a quiet place where you can  
watch

The world bent with its pain and still be patient,

## PAWNS

And warm your hands by the fire because you  
know  
That the newest sorrow and the oldest sorrow  
are one.  
They will bring him and put him down upon  
the floor:  
Be ready for that, girl. There are times when  
hope is cruel  
As a fancy-man that goes without good-bye.  
*Alice:* I have a brain that is known in three  
shire-towns  
For a level bargain. It is strange that I should  
be  
Listening now to a cracked old woman's clatter  
When my own thoughts for him should be so  
clear  
That I should n't heed the words of another  
body.  
I want no hope — only an easy space  
To remember the skill of my man among the  
hills  
And how he would surely match their cunning  
with his,  
Or else to count the hours that he's been gone  
And see that his chance is whittled quite  
away.  
To have a living thought against this fear  
Is all I want — but those screaming devils  
there

## THE STORM

Beat in my mind like the drums in Carnarvon  
streets  
That they use when they want to cheat folk  
into thinking  
That death is a handsome trade. — And so  
I let a woman with none but leaky wits  
Tell me the way I should be, — when most I  
need  
To ride no borrowed sense.

*Sarah:* It is not wind,  
For all it is louder than any flood on the hills,  
Nor the crazy snow that maddens you till your  
brain  
Is like three cats howling upon a wall,  
But the darkness that comes creeping on a  
woman

When she knows of grief before it is spoken out,  
And the sooner grieved is grief the sooner gone.  
Be ready to make him decent for the grave.

*Joan:* If he should walk in now you will not  
forget  
The trouble you are putting in the house with  
your talk.

*Sarah:* The trouble is here.

*Alice:* If he should walk in now —  
Yes, that's the way to think. I'll work it out,  
Slowly, his doings from when he left the door  
Until he comes again. You stood at the oven  
With cakes half-browned against his tea. And I

## PAWNS

Stood here beside my man and strapped his  
coat

Under his chin. He looked across your way —  
He is fond of you, child — he calls you Father  
Joan

Because — but that's not it — I told him then  
To-morrow would be time to bring the slates,  
And let him only mend the wire to-day —  
He thought so too and said — it is like a beast  
Greater than half the world and crushed in a  
trap,

Shrieking against the pain — what did he  
say? —

I have forgotten, and I had begun  
To follow it all quite clearly — what did he  
say?

*Joan:* That an hour would bring him back,  
and hungry too.

*Alice:* An hour would bring him back — but  
that is nothing.

I know it now: he went to the broken wire  
And mended it — three-quarters of an hour —  
And then he would think that after all the slates  
Were best bespoken now — six miles to go;  
He would be about a mile when this began —  
This wrath that will surely last till the Judg-  
ment Day —

And that would make two hours till he reached  
the quarry —

## THE STORM

But he went on, and the neighbours up and down

Were scared and went out searching with their lanterns,

Like lighted gnats searching the mines of hell.

Is n't it queer to see them out there dancing

When all the time he has gone a twelve-mile journey —

And then this old woman came with her neighbour duty —

It's odd folk are —

*Sarah:* It's a poor thing, spinning tales  
When there's no faith in them.

*Alice:* Hush, I have it all  
Quite clearly now, in spite of that monster baying, —

Two hours to the quarry, hindered by the night,  
Then half an hour to bargain, then two hours  
For beating back, his boots heavy with snow,  
Or a little longer — five hours and more all told —

It is nine o'clock — he went five hours ago,  
Or a little more, so that's just how it works —  
He should be coming now along the road,  
Tired — we must warm the cakes again.

*Sarah:* Aye, warm them,  
A dead man's heavy bearing.

*The clock strikes nine.*

*Alice:* That's the time

## PAWNS

To bring him back, and we'll call the lanterns  
in —

He must be near by now —

*A man is heard outside, kicking the snow off his boots. ALICE opens the door, and an OLD MAN comes in, carrying an unlit lantern.*

*The Old Man:* My candle is spent.

*JOAN takes the lantern and fits a new candle while they speak.*

*Alice:* And you are going out again?  
They have not found him?

*The Old Man:* No. It's not easy there.

*Alice:* Then he did n't go to the quarry after all.

*Joan:* Because they have n't found him?  
That's no sign.

They could n't if he went.

*Alice:* Ah, yes — how is it? —  
He went, and they've been looking on the hills —

But have not found him. Yes — he must have gone.

He should be back. You should have found him for me.

*Sarah:* She is strange because of the trouble in the house.

I am old, and that is something.

*Alice:* It is not that —

## THE STORM

I am caught away from myself by the screaming thing.

That scourges the hills. And yet in spite of that  
I had reckoned all his doings since he went  
Until his time for coming — but you came —  
You came instead. That is not right.

*The Old Man, (taking the lantern and lighting it):* We'll send

Across to the quarry now —

*Alice:* It is no use —

He'll not have gone.

*The Old Man:* The night is full of tricks,  
But another hour will have ferreted all the hill.

*He goes out.*

*Sarah:* Simon, who took his money down to market,

And would n't change for a good sound fact of cattle,

Fingered his earnings till a hole was worn  
And came to the house again with an empty  
bag.

Leave making tales, my girl, poor tales —  
they bring no profit,

Keeping the truth outside, and breaking away  
To a thimbleful of ash themselves. He is dead.  
Think hard on that. When the old king of the  
world

With the scourge and flail turns his strokes  
from the wheat

## PAWNS

On the goodman's floor and scars the goodman's  
back,

It is no time to wince. Your man is dead.

And a day and a day make Adam's fall a story.

*Alice:* Not down to the quarry — then — my  
little Joan,

Do you know at all what a man becomes to a  
woman?

How should you though? If a man should take  
A patch of the barren hill and dig with his  
hands,

And down and down till he came to marble and  
gold,

And labouring then for a dozen years or twenty  
Should build a place finer than Solomon's hall  
Till strangers with money to travel came to  
praise it,

And, when he had dug and hewn and spent his  
years

To make it a wonder, should go, and be re-  
membered

No more than an onion-pedlar in the street  
By the gaping travellers, yet he might be glad,  
If his heart was as big as a woman's, for the  
thing he'd made,

The strong and lovely thing, knowing it risen  
Out of his thought into the talk of the world.

That's how it is. A woman takes a mate;  
And like the patient builder governs him

## THE STORM

Into the goodman known through a country-side,

Or the wise friend that the neighbours will seek out,

And he, for all his love, may never know  
How she has nourished the dear fine mastery  
That bids him daily down the busy road  
And leaves her by the hearth. And when he is dead

It comes to her that the strength she has given him

To make him a gallant figure among them all  
Has been the thing that has filled her, and she lonely

Or gossiping with the folk, or about the house.

*Sarah:* When he is dead.

*Alice:* Why should I think of that?  
I am crazed, I say, because of the madness loosed

And beating against the panes. He is not dead —  
You know it, woman — Joan, it would be a lie  
To say my man was dead?

*Joan:* There, sister, wait —  
It is all we can do — there is nothing else to do.

*Sarah:* When he is dead. Let the thought  
that comes unbidden  
Be welcome, for it's the best thought. When  
he is dead.

## PAWNS

*Alice:* There is treachery against us — my man — my dear —  
My brave love — they are trying to part us now!  
But we must be too strong when . . . when he is dead. . . .

*There is a knock at the door. She makes a half movement towards it.*

He would not knock. See who it is.

*JOAN opens the door and a YOUNG TRAVELLER, buffeted and breathless, comes in.*

*The Stranger:* By Thor!  
There's beauty trampling men like crumpled leaves.  
May I come in till it's gone?

*Joan:* Surely.

*The Stranger:* I set  
Every sinew taut against this power,  
This supple torrent of might that suddenly rose

Out of the fallen dusk and sang and leapt  
Like an athlete of the gods frenzied with wine.  
It seemed to rear challenging against me,  
As though the master from Valhalla's tables,  
Grown heady in his revels, had cried out —  
Behold me now crashing across the earth  
To shake the colonies of antic men  
Into a fear shall be a jest, my fellows!

## THE STORM

And I measured myself against this bragging  
pride,

Climbing step by step through the blinding riot  
Of frozen flakes swung on the cataract wind,  
My veins praising the tyranny that was matched  
Against this poor ambitious body of mine.

*Alice:* The storm is drenched with treachery  
and sin —

It is not good to praise it.

*The Stranger:* You on the hills  
Grow dulled, maybe, to the royalty that finds  
In your crooked world a thousand splendid  
hours,

And a storm to you is but a hindered task  
Or a wall for mending or a gap in the flock.  
But I was strange among this gaiety  
Plying black looms in a black firmament,  
This joy that was spilt out of the iron heavens  
Where pity is not bidden to the hearts  
Of the immaculate gods. I was a dream,  
A cold monotony suddenly thrust  
Into a waking world of lusty change,  
A wizened death elected from the waste  
To strive and mate with eager lords of tumult.  
Beauty was winged about me, darkling speed  
Took pressure of earth and smote against my  
face;

I rode upon the front of heroic hours,  
And once was on the crest of the world's tide,

## PAWNS

Unseared as the elements. — But he mastered  
me,

That god striking a star for holiday,  
And filled himself with great barbaric laughter  
To see me slink away.

*Alice:* It is no god,  
But a brainless anger, a gaunt and evil thing  
That blame can't reach.

*The Stranger:* Not all have eyes to see. —  
I'm harsh with my words, but I come from a  
harsh quarrel

With larger thews than man's.

*Alice:* Stranger, I'd give  
Comely words to any who knocks at the door.  
You are welcome — but leave your praising of  
this blight.

You safely gabbing of sly and cruel furies,  
Like a child laughing before a cage of tigers.  
You with your fancy talk of lords and gods  
And your hero-veins — young man, do you  
know this night

Is eating through my bones into the marrow,  
And creeping round my brain till thought is  
dead,

And making my heart the oldest thing of any?  
Do you see those lights?

*The Stranger:* They seemed odd moving there,  
In a storm like this.

*Alice:* A man is lost on the hills.

## THE STORM

*The Stranger:* That's bad. But who?

*Alice:* My man is lost on the hills.

*Sarah:* She has it now; her man is dead on  
the hills.

*The Stranger:* I talked amiss, not knowing of  
trouble here.

But why should he be dead?

*Alice:* The woman is worn,  
Her mind is worn, and she lives out of the world.  
You ask at once as any wise man would.  
I have told her and told and told that he's  
not dead,

And my young sister, too, though but a girl,  
Says it, and she has a head beyond her years.  
He is lost for an hour, or maybe for a night,  
But never dead. That is the way you think?  
It is waiting that steals your proper sense away;  
And then, although you know, you let in fear  
Blaspheming the thing you know — it is wait-  
ing to-night

In the midst of an idiot wrath drumming and  
drumming

Like a plague of bees in swarm above your eyes.  
I do not know — I have not any strength  
To fathom it now, and there is none to tell me.

*Sarah:* She knows it all, though the thing is  
hard to say.

*Alice:* Have done! Young stranger, you have  
travelled the world,

## PAWNS

I think, or have grown learned in great cities,  
And can tell the way things go — is it not  
wrong

To say that a man because of an ugly night  
Should perish on his home-ground? He would  
find a road

Out of a danger such as that, because —  
That is the way things happen — tell me now?

*The Stranger:* It is likely that he would.

*Alice:* You hear that, Joan —  
A traveller who has been in foreign dangers  
And comes a scholar from a hundred cities  
Says it is well, and that we must be patient.

*The Stranger:* No, I've not travelled, and I  
only say a man

Knowing the hills would likely weather a storm.

*Alice:* There, there — you must not take it  
back again,

Because you know, and you have said it is  
well.

*Sarah:* They cut a stone that is like a small  
church window,

And they carve a name and a line out of the  
book,

And when that's done there is nothing then to  
doubt.

*The storm has suddenly cleared. The  
silence falls upon them strangely, and  
there is a pause.*

## THE STORM

*Alice:* It is spent at last. He will come from his shelter now.

My dear — come soon. Set the kettle again.

*JOAN does so. There is another pause.*

I have my thought again. It is an end.

I am broken. There is no pity anywhere.

*The Stranger:* The lights are coming.

*Sarah:* The anger never bates,  
But scourges us till time betrays the limbs,  
And strikes the tongue, and puts pence on the eyes,

And leaves the latch for stranger hands to lift.

*The blackness beyond the window has given place to clear starlight on the hills. A number of men with lanterns pass by. There is a knock: ALICE opens the door, and the OLD MAN stands there with his lighted lantern. She looks at him, and neither speaks. She turns away to the table.*

*Alice:* Why have we waited . . . all this time . . . to know . . .

*Her sorrow breaks over her*



THE GOD OF QUIET  
(1916)



TO  
MY FATHER

THE CHARACTERS ARE

A YOUNG BEGGAR

AN OLD BEGGAR

A CITIZEN

A SOLDIER

FIRST KING

A HERALD

SECOND KING

THE GOD

## THE GOD OF QUIET

*A road at the summit of a hill outside a beleaguered city. It is the evening of a hot summer day.*

*On the far side of the road is a bank, from the top of which the city could be seen. On a great stone cube, halfway up the bank, is the life-sized figure of a god. Not unlike the Buddha in presence, it is the GOD OF QUIET.*

*Two BEGGARS, a young man and an old, come in, moving towards the city. They stop.*

*Young Beggar:* Nor coin nor crust.

Three leagues of dust  
We've trodden. Blast  
Them — let them fast  
And try the flavour —

*Old Beggar:* Hold, man, hold —

'T was like enough that our tale were told  
For ever before the sun went down,  
With the devils of war let loose to frown  
On a poor man's cry for alms. We live,  
And that is something —

*Young Beggar:* The Lord forgive  
Your weakling heart —

*Old Beggar:* Nay, ask him, you,

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To pardon the stubborn thing you do  
In cursing when —

*Young Beggar:* Stop your babbling tongue,  
Your belly's old but mine is young —

*Old Beggar:* Nay, nay, my son; not angry  
now —

Not angry — there. I've seen the plough  
Break stouter stones — the times will mend.

*Young Beggar:* Old man, I spoke in haste —

*Old Beggar:* Come, lend  
Your arm — there — so; now, let us sit  
And rest us here.

*The OLD MAN sits down on the bank;  
the YOUNG MAN goes to the top  
and looks out. While he speaks the  
OLD MAN watches the GOD.*

*Young Beggar:* The slings have hit  
That city hard. Well, let them fight  
And finish. Broken walls are gates  
Not warded well, and men in flight  
Pay toll to beggars.

*Old Beggar:* God creates  
Good holy times of peace for us —

*Young Beggar:* Peace — holy times — old  
chatter-pie —

*Old Beggar:* Rich seasons after ruinous —

*Young Beggar:* Dream-dافت old man, put  
fancies by.

Wits, wits, old man, are what we need.

## THE GOD OF QUIET

There's a city learning its last of good  
And the time is come to drink and feed,  
And there's pence for wits —

*Old Beggar:* One day I stood  
At dusk in the golden harvest lands,  
And watched the sickles rise and fall,  
And the following women with patient hands  
Gleaning all, gleaning all.  
And the pigeons slept in the pines, and the  
sound  
Of leaves and waters grew strange and clear,  
And trouble had died, and I had found  
Peace, O Lord, as here.

*He has risen, bows to the God, and sits  
below the figure, untroubled.*

*Young Beggar:* It is dying, dying, that city.  
*He turns to the other.*

How  
Can a man keep sharp in the mind, and spring  
On chance when it comes, with a patchy cow  
For mate, a soft and humble thing?  
Nimble fingers, a hand to strike,  
Then — money, money . . . blast you, speak,  
You, mild as a bee old butcher shrike  
Has pegged on a thorn . . . what do you seek  
In the eyes of a copper image, made  
By some juggling fellow with fancy brains?

*He stares at the God.*  
All right, old image, I'm not afraid . . .

## PAWNS

I'm not for your flock . . . the belly's pains  
Are masters may not be served by sleep . . .  
Old drowsy god . . . I must fight, and plan,  
And lie, and be cunning, and peer, and creep —  
For starving's a dirty death for a man.

*Old Beggar:* There's many a man with a buzzing  
hive  
Of thoughts in his brain that are nothing at  
all.

*Young Beggar:* Damn you, be still! . . . You  
dead-alive  
Old grinning god, I'm what you'd call  
A fellow with gift of argument,  
And I tell you he should be hurrying now,  
Ransacking the world, not a mere consent,  
A space unpeopled, a rusty plough . . .  
Life is a matter of shouting and haste,  
You quiet, old seducing thing . . .

Why won't you shout? . . . You muddy-faced  
Old silence . . . silence . . . beggar-man, king . . .  
Victuals and void . . . sharp stones and boots . . .  
A coat and nakedness . . . rain and sun . . .  
A thistle that's blown and a thistle with  
roots . . .

All right, old god . . . all's one, all's one.

*He sits beside his fellow, composed. An exhausted SOLDIER, who has been out from the city, reconnoitring, comes in, watching the distances.*

## THE GOD OF QUIET

*Soldier:* Have you seen a king in golden gear  
And a great host moving to bring us aid?

*A pause.*

Are you drunk, or daft, or won't you hear?

*He moves up the bank, and looks down  
to the city; then, fixedly, at the GOD;  
a pause.*

Old god of quiet, you've lost your trade.

*An OLD MAN from the city comes in  
hurriedly. The SOLDIER comes down.*

*Soldier:* News — what news from the city  
walls?

*Citizen:* An arm-thrust more and the city  
falls.

Is there sound or sign of the swords of the  
king?

*Soldier:* No sound, nor sign.

*Citizen:* That life should bring  
Her comely days to so bad a close;  
Have you sought them far?

*Soldier:* There are watchful foes  
About us — I dare not set my feet  
Beyond this place.

*Citizen:* And life was sweet,  
A good adventure — and now an end  
Of pleasant ways between friend and friend.

*He moves up the bank.*

O city whose red roofs look to the sea,  
Never again your stones shall be

## PAWNS

Glad of your children who smite the waves  
With oars well swung,

*Coming down*

and bonded slaves

Shall live to grudge their dead of death.

*Soldier:* I have fought, and hoped, and  
spoken well

In the midst of fears, and I'll spend no breath  
Nor courage more to dispute with hell.

We're a broken city, and ill's the day;  
My dear was hungry, my dear is dead —

And old god Quiet may whistle away

Till the furies are quiet that throng my head.

*He sits below the God.*

*Citizen:* Nay, let your sword be busy down  
below.

*Soldier:* My limbs are all bemused. I cannot  
go.

*Citizen:* One sword may strike the balance in  
this doubt.

*Soldier:* The scales are turned; the city's term  
is out.

*Citizen:* And will you choose in this extrem-  
ity

To creep aside from fate?

*Soldier:* I only see,  
Beyond disaster that I understand  
Darkly as men the process of a hand  
Obscure in heaven and hell, a little space

## THE GOD OF QUIET

For rest, and the remembrance of a face,  
And falling sleep, then covering death, obscure  
Even as life, unfathomable, sure  
As fugitive thoughts that pass and turn again;  
Aye, death is dark as is the madness of men,  
But life distract is savage in the throat,  
A blind uncaptained vigour, and remote  
From reason's airy palaces, a way  
Teased by a million purposes, till day  
Rattles on day in black bewilderment . . .  
But death, I think, is quiet, and a spent  
Sorrow at least, when every friend is kind,  
And fretting worms no more can plague the  
mind.

*Citizen:* You yet are young for death.

*Soldier:* What cause have I  
To covet dribbling age who am now put by  
Bereaved and broken in my middle years  
From life's assembly?

*Citizen:* Thus is it one hears  
From men who are light with weariness.

*Soldier:* It is so —  
I am tired, tired, tired; old god, you know . . .  
And much disputing is but foolishness —  
A ploughing of sown fields.

*Citizen:* And in distress  
You are afraid.

*Soldier:* Who tries another's heart  
Speaks as a god, and cannot bear his part.

## PAWNS

*Citizen:* Down there for winning is a hero's name.

*Soldier:* I have endured, and hold it now no shame

To pass forgotten. There is no weight at all  
Now in this arm, and where the heroes fall  
Should I too join a sorry sword, 't would be  
But boasting in my pale infirmity  
Of such immortal courage as shall lose  
No virtue being secret. My blood and thews  
I have not spared; my mind is easy so;  
And, though my friend is death, I will not  
go

Courting a vain death for my renown.  
For every hero compassing his crown,  
Darkly in indistinguishable sleep  
A hundred lie, and the quick world shall keep  
No word of how their hearts were bright, how  
spent

At last. I am of these, and am content.

*Citizen:* Aye — it is just a weariness of brain.

*Soldier:* O lord of quiet, I am yours again,  
After confusion, after vanity.

*He turns away to the God.*

*Citizen (looking down to the city):* All now is done . . .

How long shall succour be . . .

He will come too late, this king who was our friend.

## THE GOD OF QUIET

*There is a pause; then in the distance  
victorious cries from the besiegers:*

*Voice:* It is ours. The wall is breaking.

Stricken: send

One thunder more. It falls . . . It falls . . . It falls!

*Citizen:* The time is come. And bloody burials  
Shall take their lamentable toll of days,  
And men shall know the sorrow that betrays  
Beauty and resolution and the high  
Conduct of heart proposing patiently  
Desirable shapes wrought out of shapeless dust,  
Not scattering of created things. And lust  
Of vengeance shall make black the people's  
mind,

So heavy is their trial, and so blind  
Has queer omnipotence set us from his hand.  
So death shall have his season in the land,  
Distracted death, till life shall come again  
As water to the maddened tongues of men  
Burnt on the sand of sterile leagues of waste;  
And all the words, the tumult, and the haste  
That prosper now to feed some curious pride  
Shall pass. O quiet god, be satisfied:  
The battles fail: your healing eyes endure;  
Kingdoms are ghosts: your kingdom is secure.

*THE KING, a great captain, moving to  
the city's relief, enters.*

*King:* What on the walls?

PAWNS

*Citizen:* An end is made.

*King (as to his lieutenants):* Stay you.

*Looking down to the city.*

Aye, twenty thousand spear,

Which is my measure, might be laid

Threefold in vain against their gear.

(*To his men.*) Let all be still. What men are  
these?

*Citizen:* Though strange, devout; they wor-  
ship.

*King:* Whom?

*Citizen:* The God of Quiet.

*King (he looks at the God; a pause):* A god  
who sees.

World-wearied city at your doom,  
Strong king in your victorious hour,  
You have endured, and slain, and died,  
Poor clay that would excel in power,  
Made frantic by some silly pride.

Could you not learn that while we grow  
As men, maybe from less to more  
While æons over æons flow,  
Yet holiest man may move before  
His fellows but a single pace,  
One flight of thought, and from his tongue  
Hardly shall fall a word of grace  
More than from any clod among  
Sad naturals or runagates?  
No. You must still with narrow eyes

## THE GOD OF QUIET

Consider how to top your mates  
And write your name across the skies;  
Nor great for honour your desire,  
Nor vision, nor creating song,  
But merely for consuming fire,  
Sorry possessions, and a strong  
Sword that shall rule you know not how,  
Judgment, you know not whom to bind . . .  
The fruit was full upon the bough,  
O spendthrift wind, O spendthrift wind,  
Mad hearts, mad world, mad blood of men,  
Mad counsels and mad reckoning . . .  
You quiet god, I leave again  
Their tumult, and to you I bring  
Humility, and thought that burns  
To shape itself and fetter none . . .  
We wake, a generation turns,  
We learn to love, and we have done . . .  
And shall we spend these little days  
Disputing till our veins are cold?

*He sits before the God.*

*Citizen:* The victor comes.

*King:* Or comes or stays

It is no matter.

*Citizen:* I am old —

A spent arm, a mere messenger  
Whose errands now are done. At last  
I too may rest

*He sits by the others.*

## PAWNS

*King:* I wasted where  
Shrill madness was; those moods are cast.

*A moment's pause.*

*Old Beggar:* It is the quiet mind that  
keeps

The tumults of the world in poise.

*Soldier:* It is the angry soul that sleeps  
Where the world's folly is and noise;

*King:* For anger blunts us and destroys.

*Citizen:* We are little men to be so proud.

*Young Beggar:* We are fools: what was so  
long to build

We break.

*King:* Our praise is for the loud  
Tongue and the glib.

*Old Beggar:* The gentle-willed  
We starve, and the prophet's lips are stilled.

*King:* It is the quiet mind that wakes.

*Citizen:* The angry soul ever is blind.

*Young Beggar:* Love is the bowl that folly  
breaks.

*Soldier:* Who rules the world the world shall  
find.

*Old Beggar:* All wisdom is the quiet mind.

*A pause again. A HERALD comes in.*

*Herald:* Are you the king who with his  
arms was sworn

In succour to this city now forlorn?

*King:* I am that king.

## THE GOD OF QUIET

*Herald:* And will you yet oppose  
My lord of so sure aim?

*King:* Which of us knows  
What is our aim, much less if it be true?

*Herald:* Will you set for battle?

*King:* What have I to do  
With battles now? I have thought a strange new  
thing  
This day.

*Herald:* Though some few score may call you  
king,  
My master is a king would make your crown  
A twisted slip of brass. Had you gone down  
In battle to the city walls, your end  
Had been to swell his triumph; nor shall mend  
Your case if now you bring your ranks to dare  
The fury of his captaincy.

*King:* I care  
For nothing bitter now that men may say.  
Quarrels are done.

*Herald:* My king shall choose a way  
Chastising this infirmity of will,  
Surely as had his hand been strong to fill  
Your armies with disaster had you stood  
With your king's name in a king's hardihood.

*King:* You god of quiet, some day shall men  
have spent  
All the wild humorous blood of argument?  
THE VICTORIOUS KING comes in.

## PAWNS

*Second King:* What of the lord who thought  
to stride across  
My way?

*Herald:* His valour will bring little loss  
To your victorious arms. He has put by  
The sceptre and the warrior sword, to lie  
With beggars mumbling at some idol's feet —  
That is the man —

*Second King (to FIRST KING):* Fellow, I came  
to meet

A king in arms — one worthy of my might,  
One strong to bear the intolerable sight  
Of all my spears a moment ere he fell,  
And should no other story be to tell  
Save that he too was broken at my heel.  
Now, though you slink aside, you yet shall feel  
My majesty, the anger of my name . . .

Captive and stripped, you shall be a jest, a  
shame,

A laughter to my kingdoms and your own,  
You faint and thin deserter of a throne,  
You spiritless who feared the naked blades . . .  
Why did you fear, and cheat me?

*First King:* Falsehood fades,  
And consciousness is full and the world swings  
true,

And happy vision rides unclouded through  
The ordered ranks of circumstance alone  
When man of man is patient, and the sown

## THE GOD OF QUIET

Harvests of one are gathered to his gate  
Uncoveted of any. And the hate  
Of blood for blood and bone for bone can find  
No habitation in the quiet mind . . .  
Why should the lust of man be ever set  
To bring his neighbours to the cunning net,  
Or drive him headlong howling through his  
days,

Mad with much labour in disastrous ways,  
Till kind oblivion folds him, and he can  
Never again be folly's mark?

*Second King:* Not man,  
But life it is that frets us till we die,  
Great life that urges, bidding us defy  
All who would stand against us, and to spare  
Nothing of pain and sacrifice, but dare  
Very calamity to let our name  
Thrive in the lists of honour.

*First King:* Though the flame  
Of life, of the multitudinous world, is keen  
To drive the blood thrilling about us, clean  
For all adventure and great knowledge, still  
It is man who snares the spirit of man to spill  
His fortunate treasure in dispute and vain  
Adding of barren gain to barren gain.  
And honour that is your hope is but a word  
Distract and void to hearts that have never  
heard  
Kindness and contemplation call.

## PAWNS

*Second King (to the God):* What bane  
Of madness have you planted in his brain?  
How have you slacked the heat that should  
have passed  
Defeated to my glory, and how cast  
That valour down that should have been my  
spoils?  
Not even a god shall lightly set his toils  
Against my triumphs . . .

*First King:* Why do you rail?  
Is it always so in your restless mind,  
That ever your words must rattle as hail  
On gods and men? Can you never find  
That centre of thought where life is thrilled  
As a world of wings plying the air,  
A million pulses that beat, and build,  
Of the flowing arcs that are weaving there,  
A perfect balance — a motion due  
As ever the tides of the sea have known,  
True as the flight of a god is true,  
Yet sweet and still as the carven stone . . .

*Second King:* Will you fight?  
*First King:* Your word brings back to  
me  
Swords, and blood . . . and forgotten things,  
As sometimes, out of a scent maybe  
Of moss on a wall in April, springs  
To a moment of life, that is born and sped  
In a curious flavour of the mind,

## THE GOD OF QUIET

Some buried hour from the years long dead —  
So much is your word, but this.

*Second King:* They find  
Who speak me so that they speak not well.

*First King:* O quiet god, I will speak no more.

*Second King (to the God):* O quiet god! And  
the day shall tell  
Of a god no less than a man who bore  
His will against mine and repented it —  
You have thought to subdue with your quiet  
eyes

The prey of my sword, you have thought to sit  
And govern by peace, while I must rise  
And stride through the world and sweat and  
bleed

To gather my gains, and the man shall take,  
Who should measure his might against mine,  
a creed

That tricks my glory, my will for the sake  
Of a sleepy vision! A god may rule  
As he will in some heaven with gods to hear;  
But a god who comes between men is a fool,  
And a fool is little enough to fear.

*He drives his dagger to the God's heart.*

*The God rises, and speaks, swaying.*

*The God (crying out):* Not one of you in all  
the world to know me.

*The God falls headlong. All rise.*

*There is silence for a moment.*

## PAWNS

*First King (fiercely):* Why did you do it?

*Second King:* He was a bad god —  
A sly god and slothful — an evil liver —

*First King:* Why did you do it? He was a  
friendly god,

Smiling upon our faults, a great forgiver . . .  
He gave us quietness —

*Second King:* I say that he's well dead —

*First King:* And I curse you for the killing,  
*He draws his sword.*

and here I swear

To requite the honour of this god ill bestead  
By a braggart king.

*Second King (drawing his sword):* So ho! at  
last you dare

To stand again as a man — my coney, come —  
You shall die well, being slain by me.

*Young Beggar (to OLD BEGGAR):* Can he do  
As he said and avenge the god?

*They talk together.*

*Second King (to HERALD):* Trumpet and  
drum

Bid all to arms!

*THE HERALD gives the signal, and  
they sound to arms.*

*First King (to soldier):* And bid my armies,  
you —

*THE SOLDIER does so. THE OLD  
BEGGAR raises the head of the fallen*

## THE GOD OF QUIET

*GOD in his arm, the KINGS facing each other with drawn swords, trumpets and drums sounding from both armies. ALL go off, the KINGS fighting, and for a moment nothing is heard save the clashing of their swords.*

*Old Beggar* (looking into the face of the fallen God): Not one of us in all the world to know you.

*Cries and the noise of arms break out again as the curtain falls.*



**X = 0**

**A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR  
(1917)**



**TO**  
**GILBERT CANNAN**

THE CHARACTERS ARE

PRONAX	}	<i>Greeks</i>
SALVIUS		
ILUS	}	<i>Trojans</i>
CAPYS		
A GREEK SENTINEL		
A GREEK SERVANT		

The action passes between a Greek tent and  
the Trojan walls, and is continuous.

## X = 0

### A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

#### SCENE I

*A Grecian tent on the Plain before Troy, towards the end of the ten years' war. It is a starry summer night. PRONAX and SALVIUS, two young Greek soldiers, are in the tent, SALVIUS reading by a lighted torch, PRONAX watching the night. During the scene a SENTINEL passes at intervals to and fro behind the tent.*

*Pronax:* So is the night often at home. I have seen

White orchards brighten under a summer moon,

As now these tents under the stars. This hour  
My father's coppices are full of song,  
While sleep is on the comfortable house —  
Unless one dear one wakes to think of me  
And count my chances when the Trojan death  
Goes on its nightly errand.

*The SENTINEL passes.*

It's a dear home,

And fragrant, and there's blessed fruit and corn,

## PAWNS

And thoughts that make me older than my  
youth

Come even from the nettles at the gate.  
To-day, perhaps, the harvesters are out,  
And on the night is the ripe pollen blown . . .  
And this is the third harvest that has gone  
While we have wasted on a barren plain  
To avenge some wrong done in our babyhood  
On beauty that we have not seen. Three  
years . . .

But so it is, and so it must be done,  
Till the Greek oath is proven. *Salvius*,  
Why is all lovely thought a pain?

*Salvius:* We know  
Even upon the flood of adoration,  
That beauty passes. That's the tragic tale  
That is our world.

*Pronax:* Is it not very strange  
That, prisoned in this quarrel so long and long,  
Until to remember a little Argive street  
Is torture to the bone, yet there is now  
Nothing of hatred in the blood for them  
Whose death is all our daily use, but merely  
Consent in death, knowing that death may  
strike

Across our tongues as lightly as those that lie  
For ever dumb because we might not spare.

*Salvius:* Not strange; who goes in company  
with death,

## A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

Watching his daily desolation, thinking,  
On every stroke, of all the agony  
That from that stroke goes throbbing, throb-  
bing, throbbing,  
Forgets all hate. How should we hate the dead?  
And, where death ranges as among us now,  
You, Pronax, I, and our antagonists  
And friends alike are all but as dead men

### *The SENTINEL passes.*

Moving together in a ghostly world,  
With life a luckless beggar at the door.  
It is not ours to hate, who have all put by  
That safety where men think eternity  
Immeasurably far, and leisured passions have  
Their sorry breeding place. Great kings may  
hate,  
And priests may thunder hate, and grey-beard  
prophets  
May cry again to those who cry their hate  
In pride of their new-found authority,  
Fearing lest love should mark them as they are,  
And send them barren from their brutal thrift.  
But not for us this envy. It is ours  
Merely to die, or give the death that these  
Out of their hatred or indifference will.

*Pronax:* It's not that a man grows tardy in  
his duty . . .

It's still a glad thing to do as the motherland  
bids,

## PAWNS

Though the blind soul forgets how sprang the cause.

I shall die in my hour, though it should come to-day,

Not grudging. Yet it is bitterness for youth,  
When nothing should be but scrutiny of life,  
Mating, and building towards a durable fame,  
And setting the hearthstone trim for a lover's cares,

To let all knowledge of these things go, and learn

Only of death, that should be hidden from youth,

A great thing biding upon the fulness of age,  
And not made common gossip among these tides

Of daily beastliness. And still I must remember,  
For all I have renounced my thronging life,  
My orchards, and my rivers, and the bells  
Of twilight cattle moving in the mist.

*Salvius:* I know; the mind grows faint with thinking of them —

Those little, lovely things of home. My bed  
Looks to the west on the Ionian sea —  
A sweet, fresh-smelling room it is. I wrote  
My rightest poems there. I cannot see  
A sail now coming Troyward but my brain  
Is sick for that small room, above the quay  
Where sailors laugh at dawn and all day long,

## A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

Until the silent sunset ships go out  
Into Sicilian waters.

*Pronax:* There your poems  
Were made, in Pylos; and in Athens I  
Too dreamed, although I caught no lyric song--  
I envy you your song; — I was to build  
A cleaner state; I dreamed a policy  
Purer than states have known; I was to bring  
Princedom to every hearth, to every man  
Knowledge that he was master of his fate.  
The dream is dulled. Three years of Trojan  
dust

Have taught me but to pray at night for sleep,  
And an arm stronger in cunning than my foe's,  
A quicker eye to parry death. And, *Salvius*,  
What of your songs?

*Salvius:* Asleep these many days,  
Biding their happy time if that should be.

*Pronax:* And death is watching,  
*The SENTINEL passes.*  
and your song, that grew  
In the womb of generations for the use  
And joy of men, may perish ere it takes  
Its larger music, that the tale may go  
That Greece drove bloodier war than Ilium;  
That's a poor bargain. . . . But these thoughts  
that stir  
Like ghosts out of a life that should have been  
Neglect my duty. It is past the hour

## PAWNS

I should be nosing along the Trojan wall  
To catch what prey may be. I have scarred the  
wall

At the bend there where I told you, in the  
breaking stone,

These many nights, until at last I've made  
A foothold to the top. It's a queer game,  
This tripping of life suddenly in the dark,  
This blasting of flesh that is wholesome yet in  
the blood,

And those who weep, I think, are as those  
would weep

If I should fall. I loathe it; but, good-night;  
You should sleep; it is late, and it is your guard  
at dawn.

*He is arming himself, and wrapping  
himself in his cloak.*

Good-night. What are you reading?

*Salvius:* Songs that one  
Made in my province. The sails are in his song,  
And seabirds, and our level pasturelands,  
And the bronzed fishers on the flowing tides.  
His name was Creon. I will make such songs  
If the years will.

*Pronax (who has poured himself out and drunk  
a cup of wine):* I know. Put out the  
torch

If you're abed before I come. Good-night.

*Salvius:* Good-night: good luck.

## A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

*Pronax:* And will you bid them fill  
The trough; this business may make bloody  
hands.

*He looks out into the night, and goes.*

*The SENTINEL passes.*

*Salvius (reading):* Upon the dark Sicilian  
waves,  
The casting fishers go . . .  
*The curtain falls*

### SCENE II

*On Troy wall. CAPYS, a young Trojan soldier, is on guard, looking out over the plain where the Greeks are encamped. ILUS, another young soldier, his friend, wearing a bear-skin, comes to him.*

*Ilus:* When does your watch end?

*Capys:* In two hours; at midnight.

*Ilus:* They're beautiful, those tents, under  
the stars.

It is my night to go like a shadow among them,  
And, snatching a Greek life, come like a shadow  
again.

It's an odd skill to have won in the rose of your  
youth —

Two years, and once in seven days — a hun-  
dred,

More than a hundred, and only once a fault.

## PAWNS

A hundred Greek boys, Capys, like myself —  
Loving, and quick in honour, and clean of  
fear —

Spoiled in their beauty by me whose desire is  
beauty

Since first I walked the April hedgerows. Would  
time

But work upon this Helen's face, maybe  
This nine-year quarrel would be done, and  
Troy

Grow sane, and her confounding councillors  
Be given carts to clean and drive to market.  
What of your sea-girl? Has she grown?

*Capys:* You ask

Always the question, friend. The chisels rust,  
The moths are in my linen coats, my mallets  
Are broken. Ilus, in my brain were limbs  
Supple and mighty; the beauty of women  
moved

To miraculous birth in my imagining;  
I had conceived the body of man, to make  
Divine articulation of the joy  
That flows uncounted in every happy step  
Of health; the folk faring about Troy streets  
Should have flowered upon my marble marvel-  
lously:

I would have given my land a revelation  
Sweet as the making of it had been to me.  
And still it shall be, if ever from my mind

## A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

Falls this obscure monotony, that makes  
The world an echo, its vivid gesture gone.  
Troy peaceful shall be Troy magnificent,  
For I will make her so.

*Ilus:* It would be grand  
If Troy would use us as we might be used,  
To build and sing and make her market-places  
Honest, and show her people that all evil  
Is the lethargic mind. I have seen this Troy  
Bloom in my thought into a simple state  
Where jealousy was dead because no man spoke  
Out of his vanity of the thing he knew not.  
Capys, it is so little that is needed  
For righteousness; we are all so truly made,  
If only to our making we were true.  
Why should we fight these Greeks? There was  
some anger,  
Some generous heat of the blood those years  
ago,  
When Paris brought his Helen into Troy  
With Menelaus screaming at his heels;  
But that's forgotten now, and none can stay  
This thing that none would have endure. I have  
thought  
Often, upon those nights when I have gone  
Fatally through the Grecian tents, how well  
Might he whose life I stole and I have thriven  
Together conspiring this or that of good  
For all men, and I have sickened, and gone on

## PAWNS

To strike again as Troy has bidden me,  
For an oath is a queer weevil in the brain.

*Capys:* Who's there?

*A Voice:* Troy and the Trojan death.

*Capys:* Pass Troy.

It is still upon the plains to-night, and the stars  
Are a lantern light against you — you must  
go

Warily, Ilus. The loss of many friends  
Has sharpened my love, not dulled me against  
loss.

I am careful for you to-night in all this beauty  
Of glowing summer — disaster might choose  
this night

So brutally, and so disaster likes.  
Go warily.

*Ilus:* I know the tented squares  
And every lane among the Greeks, as I know  
The walls of Troy; and I can pass at night  
Within an handshot of a watching eye,  
And be but a shadow of cloud or a windy bush.  
A hundred times, remember.

*Capys:* Yet would I could come  
To take your danger or share it.

*Ilus:* No; there's a use  
That's more than courage in this. And, Capys,  
yet

Those chisels must win your vision into form  
For the world's light and ease. It's an ill day

## A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

Among ill days that smites the seer's lips.  
Your work's to do.

*Capys:* And yours — that dream of Troy Regenerate, with the heart of the people shown In the people's life, not lamentably hurt By men who, mazed with authority, put by Authority's proper use, and so are evil, While still the folk under their tyranny keep Their kindness, waiting upon deliverance. So may we come together to our work, In prophecy you of life, creation I. How long to-night?

*Ilus:* Before your watch is done I shall be back. Here at this point, before The night is full; throw me the rope upon The signal, thus —

*He whistles. He is climbing over the parapet, to which he has hooked a rope.*

Peace with you till I come.

*Capys:* And luck with you. Go warily. Farewell.

*ILUS drops down to the plain below.*

*CAPYS draws the rope up. There is silence for a moment.*

*Capys (moving to and fro along the wall):*

Or Greek or Trojan, all is one  
When snow falls on our summertime,

## PAWNS

And when the happy noonday rhyme  
Because of death is left undone.

The bud that breaks must surely pass,  
Yet is the bud more sure of May  
Than youth of age, when every day  
Death is youth's shadow in the glass.

*A hand is seen groping on the parapet.  
PRONAX, looking cautiously along  
the wall, draws himself up silently,  
unseen by CAPYS, who continues:*

Beside us ever moves a hand,  
Unseen, of deadly stroke, and when  
It falls on youth —

*He hears the movement behind him, and  
turns swiftly.*

Who's there?

*Pronax (rushing upon him): A Greek unlucky  
to Trojan arms —*

A sworn Greek, terrible in obedience.

*His onslaught has overwhelmed CAPYS,  
who falls without a cry, the Greek's  
dagger in his breast. PRONAX draws  
it out, looks at his dead antagonist,  
shudders, peers out over the wall, and  
very carefully climbs down at the  
point where he came.*

*The curtain falls*

# A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

## SCENE III

*The Greek tent again. SALVIUS is still reading, and the torch burning. A SERVANT brings a large jar of water which he pours into the trough outside the tent. He goes with the jar, and a moment later the SENTINEL passes behind the tent. There is silence for a few moments, SALVIUS turning the pages of his book. Then, from the shadow in front of the tent, ILUS in his bearskin is seen stealthily approaching. He reaches the tent opening without a sound, and in the same unbroken silence his dagger is in the Greek's heart. ILUS catches the dead man as he falls, and lets his body sink on to one of the couches inside the tent. The SENTINEL passes. ILUS, breathless, waits till the steps have gone, and then, stealthily as he came, disappears.*

*There is a pause. PRONAX comes out of the darkness, and, throwing his cloak on the ground, goes straight to the trough, and begins to wash his hands.*

**Pronax:** What, still awake, and reading?

Those are rare songs,

To keep a soldier out of his bed at night.

Ugh — Salvius, sometimes it's horrible —

He had no time for a word — he walked those walls

## PAWNS

Under the stars as a lover might walk a garden  
Among the moonlit roses — this cleansing's  
good —

He was saying some verses, I think, till death  
broke in.

Cold water's good after this pitiful doing,  
And freshens the mind for comfortable sleep.  
Well, there, it's done, and sleep's a mighty  
curer

For all vexations.

*The SENTINEL passes.*

It's time that torch was out —  
I do not need it, and you should be abed . . .  
Salvius . . .

*He looks into the tent for the first time.*

What, sleeping, and still dressed?  
That's careless, friend, and the torch alight  
still . . .

Salvius . . .

Salvius, I say . . . gods! . . . what, friend . . .

Salvius, Salvius . . .

Dead . . . it is done . . . it is done . . . there  
is judgment made . . .

Beauty is broken . . . and there on the Trojan  
wall

One too shall come . . . one too shall come . . .

*The SENTINEL passes.*

*The curtain falls*

# A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

## SCENE IV

*The Trojan wall. The body of CAPYS lies in the starlight and silence. After a few moments the signal comes from ILUS below. There is a pause. The signal is repeated. There is a pause.*

*The curtain falls*



COPHETUA  
(1911)



TO

JOHN GALSWORTHY

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

KING COPHETUA

A CAPTAIN

FIVE WISE MEN

THE KING'S MOTH

THE MAID

BEGGARS

## COPHETUA

*The Scene is the Hall of the King's Palace. On the left are two thrones, one above the other, with chairs below them.*

*At the back of the stage is a tall doorway, open, showing a path to a broad flight of steps which leads up to the Temple. Two or three BEGGARS are sitting on the steps.*

*There is an open corridor to the right of the stage. The KING'S MOTHER is seated on the lower throne. On the chairs below are five WISE MEN and a CAPTAIN.*

*Captain:* 'T is noon, and with echoing wing  
The days of a month have sped,  
And we stay to know if the king  
Will take a queen to his bed.

*The King's Mother:* You have the oath of a king

That, be it for weal or woe,  
In the space of a month he would speak of this thing,

He will come, he will come — you shall know.

*First Wise Man (very old):* He will hear. Not in vain, not in vain

Shall his people beseech him of this,  
He will hear us, nor count of the pain

## PAWNS

Which may bloom peradventure to bliss.  
I have stood at the gates of the kings,  
His fathers, by year and by year,  
They failed not to grant us the things  
That were shaped in our prayers. He will hear.

*Second Wise Man:* He is haughty and fiery  
proud,

A spirit not easy to tame,  
He will face us unbroken, unbowed,  
And scorn us and put us to shame.

*Third Wise Man:* He is King, and howbeit  
he turns

To the right or the left it is well,  
If he hearkens our crying or spurns,  
He is King. It is well, it is well.

*Fourth Wise Man (blind):* Since the day  
when God shattered my sight  
I fear whatso things may befall,  
Who shall know if he answer aright?  
Who shall say if of wisdom our call?

*Fifth Wise Man:* I wait for his word unafraid.  
The ways of the world are set out  
By God's will; shall we tremble dismayed  
However this thing come about?

*Captain:* By the might of the spear, he shall  
speak  
As we bid him to speak, or his crown  
Shall be broken — what, are we so meek  
That we bow if a king should but frown?

## COPHETUA

*King's Mother:* I fear him. My son, should you be

Too stubborn, how then should I set  
Any peace in my heart or go free  
Of a fear that I might not forget?

How then, with a sword set between  
Your crown and the men of the land,  
Should the pride in my heart keep clean  
For a son who held hate by the hand?

*Enter, from the corridor, KING COPHETUA. They all rise as he goes up to his throne. As he takes his place he motions them to sit.*

*Cophetua:* I have come. As a slave ye have called me.

As a dog to his masters I come.  
With the sting of your tongues ye have galled  
me —

Do you bid me to speak or be dumb?  
O my masters, your King is before you,  
A plaything, a chattel, a fool, —  
Cry shame on the mothers who bore you  
If you bend not his will to your rule.  
Shall a king in his folly be daring  
To speak as he would, to be wise  
As he knows in his heart, and set flaring  
His insolent flame to the skies?  
Shall a king give a thought to his vision  
When his masters forbid him, and frown?

## PAWNS

Throw your dust in his teeth, and derision  
Pluck out all the gems of his crown!

*Second Wise Man:* He is haughty and fiery  
proud,  
A spirit not easy to tame.

*Fourth Wise Man:* There is fear in my heart,  
and a cloud  
On my soul.

*First Wise Man:* O my King, when they  
came,  
The people, to speak with the kings  
Long ago they were heard.

*Third Wise Man:* Let him speak,  
He is King, and a holiness clings  
To the words of a king.

*Fifth Wise Man:* We are weak,  
We are creatures of God, and His will  
Is over us all; He alone  
Is mighty to save and to spill.

*King's Mother:* A sword on the steps of the  
throne  
Is lying, and blood on the blade.

*Captain:* Enough! Shall we chaffer with  
speech  
As men in a market dismayed,  
Shall we take not the thing we may reach  
With little of toil?

For a year  
Has the voice of the men of the land

## COPHETUA

Cried out for a king to hear  
Of his grace. For an answer we stand.  
It is little enough that we pray,  
But here, in the name of the dead,  
I swear you shall hearken to-day —  
Will you take a queen to your bed?

*Cophetua:* It is well. I am bidden to speak,  
You are gracious to grant me this thing.  
You are strong and you bear with the weak,  
You will loosen the tongue of a king.

*Second Wise Man:* He is haughty and fiery  
proud.

*Captain:* No more. There are rumours that go  
In the streets —

*Cophetua:* Unbroken, unbowed,  
I give you your answer — I know  
Of the rumours and threatening spears,  
I know of the sword in the night,  
But nothing of pitiful fears.  
I will answer, — and hear me aright,—  
I will not take a queen to my bed,  
Though the world should clamour and cry,  
Till my will is so shaped. It is said.  
You may go — I have spoken it, I.

*For a moment there is silence. Then  
mere assertion gives place to reason-  
ing.*

*First Wise Man:* Who shall be king in the end?  
When you are fallen to sleep,

## PAWNS

To whom shall our children look to keep  
Peace between friend and friend?

*Cophetua:* Your children shall carve a way  
To peace with the might of their hands.  
Shall they bear to their doors the fruit of the  
lands

Because, on a far-off day,  
A king of their fathers fell  
And sold the gates of his soul  
To the rabble ranks for a pitiful dole,  
And married his love to hell?

*Second Wise Man:* You are haughty and  
fiery proud.

*Cophetua:* The meanest man of you all  
May mate where he would. Shall a king then  
fall

And tremble before you, cowed,  
And be humbled and shorn of fame,  
Be called a braggart, a knave,  
That he dares no less than a thrall to save  
The shrine of his heart from shame?

*Third Wise Man:* You are King, and I dare  
not cross

My will with a crownèd king's,  
But your will so set to your people brings  
Peril of branded loss.  
There are kingdoms over the seas,  
And kingdoms near to your gates,  
Whose daughters are moulded for comely mates,

## COPHETUA

And will you not choose of these,  
And gather about your throne  
A safety fashioned of might?

*Cophetua:* I will break my body to dust in  
fight,

I am careless of blood and bone,  
I will forfeit my latest breath,  
I will harry the stranger lords,  
I will face unfriended the outland hordes,  
I will kiss the lips of death,  
I will keep no secret store  
Of peace in my house, I will spare  
No strength in what things a man may dare  
Or men have dared before;  
But the doors of my love shall be  
Guarded and unbetrayed,  
And reckoning there shall be surely made  
'Twixt none but my God and me.

*Fourth Wise Man:* I fear the striving of men  
And the challenge of boasting lips.

*Cophetua:* Old man, you are nigh to your  
day's eclipse.

Would you have in your fancy, when  
You pass away to the night,  
The strands of a troubled tale  
Of a high king setting his love for sale?

*Fourth Wise Man (bewildered merely):* The  
Lord hath shattered my sight.

*Fifth Wise Man:* Be it as you have said.

## PAWNS.

God watches.

*Cophetua:* He watches well.

I have strayed too near to the gates of hell,  
But He watched me, and His hand led.

*Captain:* You blacken His name. We are  
proud,

We people, aye, proud as a king;  
You shall rue the day when you chose to fling  
Your scorn as pence to the crowd.

We will that a queen should sit  
On the king's right hand, and still  
We stand as men for the fruits of our will,  
Nor abate one word of it.

*King's Mother:* My son, O my son, be not  
Too stubborn — I fear the end,  
I fear the day that no days may mend,  
And the happening unforgot.  
Is it little, my son, you lose?  
There are women with faces fair,  
And maddening limbs and shining hair,  
And goodly women to choose;  
Women whose kisses would fire  
Your lips and quicken your blood,  
And set a tumult, a golden flood  
In your soul, and a new desire  
In the season of scents and stars,  
And a sweeter song in the day —

*Cophetua:* My mother, you have no word to  
say

## COPHETUA

Of worth. Would you set in bars  
The sacred spirit of me?  
No, mother, you know I speak  
As a man should speak, but your will is weak  
For fear of the things to be.  
You are true, my mother, you bring  
A deep wise love to the child, —  
Let your love be stainless, and undefiled  
By craven fears for the king.

*Captain:* She is wise of her fear —

*Cophetua:* Be still —

You are rude, sir, sharpen your tongue  
On the steps of a throne whose king is sung  
For a poor unkingly will.  
I have given my answer; to each  
As he spake I have answered again.  
Do you hold me a gibbering clod among  
men,  
To waver and juggle with speech?

*He moves from the throne to the open  
doorway at the back.*

For my people, I know them aright,  
They will hear me, they hold not in scorn  
A man whose flame without fear is borne,  
With the wings of the wind in flight.  
I will tell them. I wait the call  
Of my soul and none else beside;  
I will bring to the hall of their kings a bride  
When my choice unbidden fall.

## PAWNS

*During the foregoing speeches other BEGGARS have joined those sitting on the steps. Among them is a MAID. As the KING now goes out of the Hall and up the steps to the Temple, the BEGGARS hold out their hands for alms. The KING gives. The MAID, who is seated on an upper step alone, by the door of the Temple, asks nothing. The KING pauses for a moment to look at her; she touches his cloak with her hand, and lifts it to her lips. He passes into the Temple.*

*Second Wise Man:* He has gone. He is fiery proud.

*Third Wise Man:* He is King. It is well, it is well.

*Fourth Wise Man:* There is fear on my heart, and a cloud.

*King's Mother:* There is building a story to tell —

*First Wise Man:* He leaves the clear ways that are worn.

*Fifth Wise Man:* 'T is the purpose of God — we must bend.

*Captain:* Not in vain shall he mock us and scorn.

*King's Mother:* A story — who knows of the end?

## COPHETUA

*Second Wise Man:* This day is fulfilled my foretelling.

*Third Wise Man:* The stars are in counsel with kings.

*Fourth Wise Man:* There is gloom in the house of our dwelling.

*Fifth Wise Man:* To God be the shaping of things.

*First Wise Man:* The thread of the years now is broken.

*Captain:* To the edge of his sword be the shame.

*King's Mother:* What word of this day will be spoken?

What song will be sung of our fame?

*The KING comes through the Temple doors. The BEGGARS, as before, hold out their hands; the MAID alone asks nothing. COPHETUA offers her a bag of gold, which she takes; she rises and stands with the KING at the top of the steps; she pours the gold from the bag down the steps, and the BEGGARS collect the scattered coins. She kisses the bag, and ties it in her girdle. The KING stands looking at her for a moment, then comes down to the Hall; he stands by the open doors.*

*Cophetua:* I knelt before God's altar rail,  
And something leapt within my brain;

## PAWNS

God's mother smiled; her beauty pale  
Was over me; and then again  
I heard my people crying out,  
And woven in the cries of them  
I heard a kiss that clung about  
The colours of my raiment's hem.

My prayers went up with feathered speed,  
But still I saw the face of one  
Who said no word of all her need  
Among the beggars in the sun,  
Of one who sought no little dole  
But gave great tribute to her King,  
And something fiery in my soul  
Stirred with the passion of the spring.

And still I heard my people cry,  
“A queen! a queen! we seek a queen!”  
No pride was on my lips, and I  
Told God what thing I then had seen,  
What rumour through my blood was sent  
As I passed through His holy gate,  
And surely up to God they went —  
My little secret words of fate.

Out of God's house I came. She stood  
Before me. She had nought to bring  
Of land or warrant counted good  
To fire the temper of a king,

## COPHETUA

Only a treasure in her eyes  
Of pure and consecrated days,  
And presage that her soul was wise  
Of travel in the starry ways.

You counselled me. I heard your words,  
Your threats I heard, your cunning speech,  
Your clamouring of sheathless swords,  
But citadelled beyond the reach  
Of all these things my heart was free;  
Yet then a secret word was said  
In the blue air. This thing shall be —  
A queen is coming to my bed.

*Captain:* The child of a beggar!

*Second Wise Man:* You dare  
Lift up this shame in your land?

*First Wise Man:* You speak not in wisdom  
— beware.

*Fourth Wise Man:* God give me to understand.

*King's Mother:* My son, O my son, but wait  
A little — how should this be —  
A son of proud old kings to mate  
With a girl base-born?

*Fourth Wise Man:* Ah, me!

*Cophetua:* How? Would ye drive me to and  
fro

As straw beneath the goodman's flail?

## PAWNS

God's angels laugh, I think, to know  
How much a king's word may avail.  
I stand, road-girt, before a sweet  
New land of holy joys to-day,  
And she alone has led my feet,  
And she alone shall say me nay.

"Base-born," you cry — "a beggar's child."  
So be it. Yet there haply ran  
Some strain of passion undefiled  
When in the twilight some tall man  
Bore homeward to his bridal bed  
Of curling leaves beneath the sky  
A clear-limbed girl whose beauty led  
Love laughing in captivity.

You bid me mate. And shall it be  
To make adultery a thing  
Honoured from sea to shining sea  
For that the sinner is a king?  
My blood is kingly? It shall take  
A strain of vagrant wind and sun.  
I, born a king, henceforth will make  
The people and the sceptre one.

*He walks up the steps to the MAID; he stands speaking to her, and then leads her down into the Hall.*

*The Maid:* It seemed a very little thing  
That you should come and lead me down

## COPHETUA

Here to your throne. You are a king,  
There is a splendour on your crown,  
Yet you were born of changing dust  
Even as I, and when you spoke  
That word to me, the great God thrust  
His arm out and the barrier broke,  
And I was maid and you were man,  
Built of one flesh; it was as though  
No word had been since time began  
Of kings and beggars.

*Cophetua:* And a low  
Sweet sound of music fell about  
My senses, as of beating wings  
Of loves that sway the world without  
A thought of beggars or of kings.

*The Maid:* You are king, and kings are great,  
Yet, though I'd kneel before a throne,  
My heart would be inviolate —  
No king should claim it for his own;  
I worship kingly men, I bow  
Before the king's ancestral might,  
Yet all these things are nought, and now  
No king is standing in my sight.  
I see a man who spoke to me  
As a man should speak, loving well.

*Cophetua:* I see a queen whose lips might be  
Fashioned great histories to tell.

*The Maid:* I see a man who set aflame  
My womanhood and made it whole.

## PAWNS

*Cophetua:* I see a holy queen who came  
As a great song into my soul.

*The Maid:* I saw an eagle in the air —

*Cophetua:* The eagle clove the cloudy  
ways —

*The Maid:* Strong-winged he was, and proud  
and fair —

*Cophetua:* And there he met the golden rays  
Hidden to earth —

*The Maid:* And far and far  
He sped with swift and level flight,

*Cophetua:* And wrung the glory of a star  
Out of the garners of the night.

*First Wise Man:* Great queens might take  
her by the hand,

*Third Wise Man:* Great kings might kiss her  
on the lips,

*Fifth Wise Man:* God's laughter now is on  
the land,

*Fourth Wise Man:* Light trembles through  
my day's eclipse,

*Second Wise Man:* The king establishes his  
pride,

*Captain:* I kneel to her, no threat is now  
Upon my tongue, she is a bride  
To whom a king's folk well may bow.

*King's Mother:* My child, what way the  
King may choose  
Is well; the soul of you is wise,

## COPHETUA

And a queen's crown will no way lose  
Its splendour set above your eyes;  
The word is spoken, and aloud  
Along the day as fire it runs,  
And you shall bear your King a proud  
And comely line of kingly sons.

*The Maid:* Not dowered as a queen might be  
Who sold herself you see me here,  
Yet something do I bring for fee,  
Good counsel, comfortable cheer,  
A body undefiled, a soul  
Not alien before the Lord,  
A will unbent, a purpose whole,  
A passion shining as a sword.

To you in humble-wise, my King,  
With nought of fear or servile greed,  
My sacred love unsmeared I bring,  
My service, and my woman's need.  
A story of some careful days  
Spent in a cloister no man knows,  
Some peace of silent lilyed ways,  
Some beauty of the curling rose.

*The KING leads her up to the throne.*

*They stand one on each side of it.*

*Cophetua (to the people):* Am I the less a king  
that here

I choose as might a man uncrowned,  
Or should you hold a queen more dear

## PAWNS

For armèd men or tribute ground?  
If so it be, the word be said,  
And we will pass from out your land,  
And sleep upon a stranger bed  
And prosper by a stranger hand.

*First Wise Man:* She too shall pass where  
queens have trod,

*Third Wise Man:* You, being King, have  
chosen well,

*Fifth Wise Man:* Not niggard is the hand of  
God,

*Fourth Wise Man:* No veiled fear is now to  
tell,

*Second Wise Man:* Now beautiful is all your  
pride,

*Captain:* My sword shall bring you peace  
alone,

*King's Mother:* My trouble now is purified,  
And love is laughing from a throne.

*Cophetua:* In the years far away, far away,  
Our love shall be told as a song.

*The Maid:* Many men shall remember, and  
say —

They kept their love guarded from wrong.

*Cophetua:* Your beauty shall be as a tale  
For the firing of hearts to the end.

*The Maid:* And never the story shall fail  
Of a king who was mighty to lend  
A glory to love in his land.

## COPHETUA

*Cophetua:* And the children of men unbegot  
Shall listen, and understand  
The tale of a love unforget.  
Our kiss shall be set on the crest  
Of the travelling years, and be borne  
As a torch from the east to the west,  
Till the sinews of love be outworn.

CURTAIN



## **APPENDIX**



## APPENDIX

### THE STORM

was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, on Saturday, May 8th, 1915, under the direction of the author, with the following cast:

<i>Alice</i> . . . .	Cecily Byrne
<i>Joan</i> . . . .	Betty Pinchard
<i>Sarah</i> . . . .	Margaret Chatwin
<i>An Old Man</i> . . . .	W. Ribton Haines
<i>A Young Stranger</i> . . . .	E. Ion Swinley

At the Stratford-upon-Avon Memorial Theatre, on August 26th, 1915, *Alice* was played by Mary Merrall, and on the play's revival at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, on March 18th, 1916, the cast was:

<i>Alice</i> . . . .	Mona Limerick
<i>Joan</i> . . . .	Betty Pinchard
<i>Sarah</i> . . . .	Margaret Chatwin
<i>An Old Man</i> . . . .	William J. Rea
<i>A Young Stranger</i> . . . .	Scott Sunderland

### THE GOD OF QUIET

was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, on Saturday, October 7th, 1916,

## APPENDIX

under the direction of the author, with the following cast:

<i>A Young Beggar</i>	.	.	Joseph A. Dodd
<i>An Old Beggar</i>	.	.	W. Brunton
<i>A Citizen</i>	.	.	William J. Rea
<i>A Soldier</i>	.	.	William Armstrong
<i>First King</i>	.	.	Felix Aylmer
<i>A Herald</i>	.	.	Frank Moore
<i>Second King</i>	.	.	Frank D. Cleelow
<i>The God</i>	.	.	Noel Shammon

The stage setting and the costumes were designed by Arthur J. Gaskin.

## X = 0; A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, on Saturday, April 14th, 1917, under the direction of the author, with the following cast:

<i>Pronax</i>	.	.	.	Felix Aylmer
<i>Salvius</i>	.	.	.	Nicholas Bly
<i>Ilus</i>	.	.	.	Joseph A. Dodd
<i>Capys</i>	.	.	.	William J. Rea
<i>A Greek Sentinel</i>		.	.	Alfred J. Brooks
<i>A Greek Servant</i>		.	.	Richard Wayne

The setting was devised by Frank D. Cleelow.

## COPHETUA

was first performed by The Pilgrim Players, in Birmingham, on November 18th, 1911, the actors being unnamed, and then at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on October 27th, 1917, under the direction of the author, with the following cast:

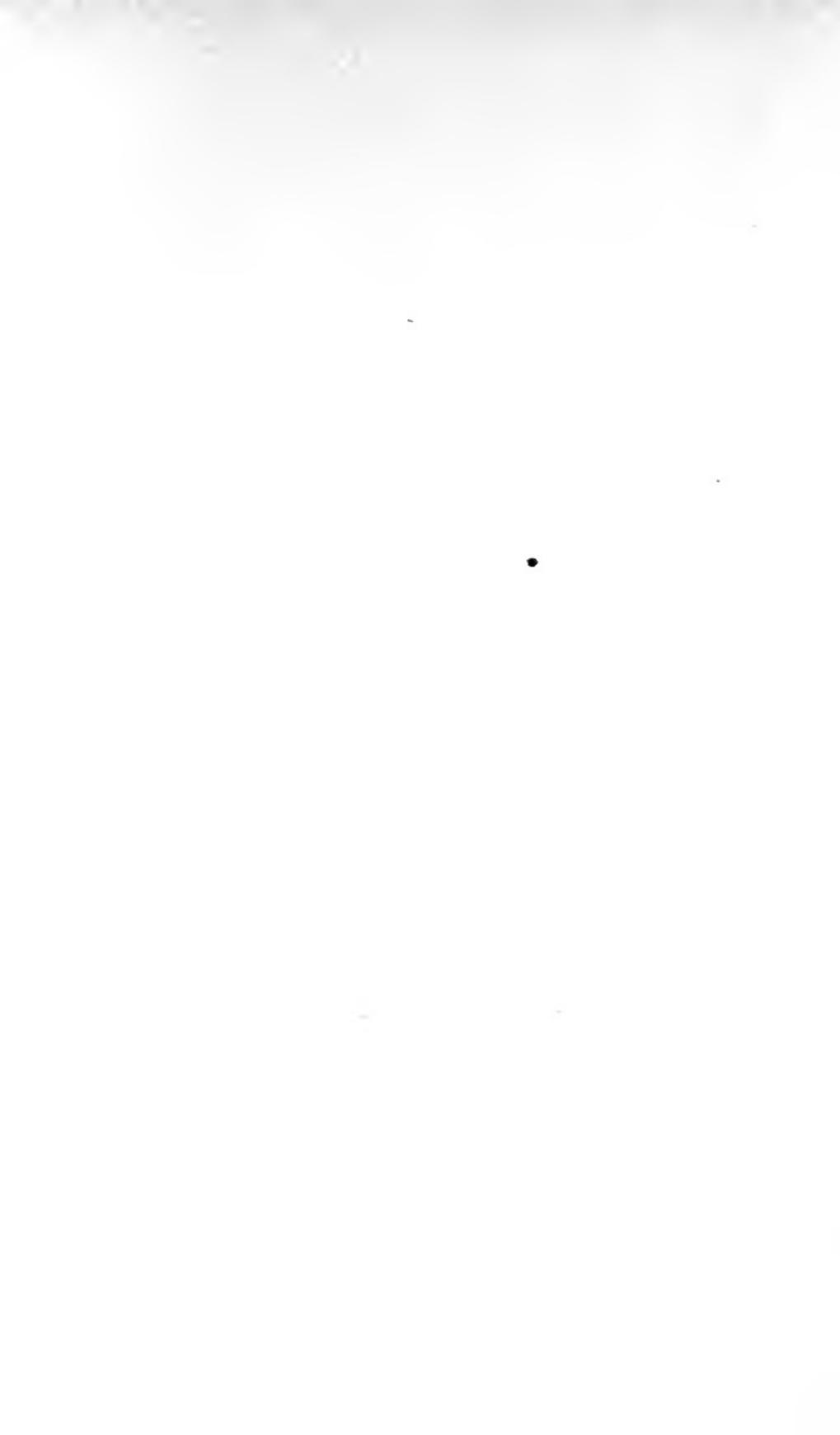
<i>Cophetua</i>	.	.	.	William J. Rea
<i>Captain</i>	.	.	.	Frank Moore
<i>First Wise Man</i>	.	.	.	Noel Shammon
<i>Second Wise Man</i>	.	.	.	Frank D. Cleowlow
<i>Third Wise Man</i>	.	.	.	Alfred J. Brooks
<i>Fourth Wise Man</i>	.	.	.	William Bache
<i>Fifth Wise Man</i>	.	.	.	Joseph A. Dodd
<i>King's Mother</i>	.	.	.	Margaret Chatwin
<i>The Maid</i>	.	.	.	Dorothy Green

The setting was devised by Frank D. Cleowlow.

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